



Minutes of ADSO Board Meeting

19 September 2014

Conference Room 4, Islington Council Town Hall

Upper Street, London

In Attendance:

John Austin	Chairman	P
John Quinton	Vice Chairman and Director for Government Consultation	P
Sue Keogh	Director for Regional Developments and Events	P
Laura Latham	Director for Communications	P
John Lynch	Director for Finance	A
Mark Towers	Director for Training	P
Tom van Hoven	Company Secretary	P
Linda Scott	North East	P
Helen Gee	North West	P
Vacant	Yorkshire and Humberside	
Matt Kane	East Midlands	P
Georgina Atkinson	West Midlands	P
Tim Revell	London	P
Jack Latkovic	South West	A

Sarah Selway	South West	P
Clive Parker	South East	P
Colin Sweeney	East of England	P

1 Welcome and Introductions

John Austin, ADSO Board Chairman, welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to:

- Colin Sweeney – East of England representative. Colin will be supported by Joanna Boaler from Essex CC.
- Sarah Selway who was standing in for Jack Latkovic – South West.

The Board recognised Brendan Martin's contributions as representative of Yorkshire and Humberside and noted that he had decided to step down.

The apologies were noted.

2 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 11th July, and the minutes of the Board Telecons held on 18th July and 19th August 2014 were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

All action points from the previous meetings had been completed or included in the agenda for this meeting.

3 Association Website

Laura Latham, Director for Communications, provided an update on the ADSO website as detailed in her report. 1769 Absolute unique visitors on the site. Of the 2478 overall visits to the website 7.1 % were new visitors. This slight reduction is probably as a result of the summer holidays.

Following discussion by the Board at its meeting in July 2014, approval was given to take forward the communications activity proposed by consultant Richard Vize following his support to the Board. An Action Plan has been drawn up to capture the areas of activity and track progress.

Laura also presented a copy of the ADSO Spokesperson Role Description.

The overall timescales for implementation were proposed as one year and website activity and ongoing review will enable success to be monitored and areas which continue to prove challenging to implement highlighted. Laura suggested that a full review and next steps discussion will need to take place in June 2015. It may be advisable to seek the views of Richard Vize at that time.

Updated profiles of Board Members have been produced and published on the website. These will be promoted during September and October 2014. LL

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the website statistics be noted.
2. That the content of the Communications Action Plan and the progress made in taking the actions forward, be noted.

4 Conference 2014

Sue Keogh, Director for Regional Developments and Events provided an update on arrangements for the 2014 Conference.

Andrew Taylor was no longer available as keynote speaker on day one. Sue and the Chairman will explore other options. SK/JA

Matt Kane reported that 3 sponsors had been confirmed. The Board supported the idea of a quiz to encourage delegates to meet with the sponsors. Matt will liaise with the sponsors about the detail. Matt also undertook to get MK

the information to Laura for publication on the website.

It was RESOLVED:

The Board noted progress with arrangements for the conference.

5 Directors' Reports

5.1 Chairman's Report

Knowles on Local Authority Meetings

The 7th edition of Knowles has been published and ADSO has retained the discounted rate when ordered through the ICSA.

Wales

Following the visit to Wales by the Chairman and Sue Keogh, a number of requests for guest access to our website have been received. We have also been contacted by an awarding body in Wales who have expressed an interest in our qualifications. We are awaiting a discussion with them.

Raising ADSO profile

Following the discussion at the last meeting and the updating of the action plan with regard to communications, the following action had been taken:

(a) Letter to the LGA reminding them of ADSO's existence. The Chairman, Laura Latham and Sue Keogh met their Head of Governance on 18 September. They were asked to keep ADSO on their radar and to consult ADSO on matters regarding democratic services. The role of a Member Champion was discussed – ADSO will need

to re-think what it expected from someone in that role.

(b) The Chairman had sent a letter to Eric Pickles challenging his comments about Council's acting like "Putin's Russia" in relation to the Openness Regulations. Acknowledgement received. Awaiting full response.

(c) Response published in Guardian Public Leaders Network to article by a journalist re Openness regulations. E mail sent to Editor offering ADSO's expertise to comment on topical issues. Acknowledgement received.

(d) Article sent to both the MJ and Local Government Chronicle re-Openness regulations. Not published.

(e) The Chairman had written again to the Northern Ireland Local Government Association. Awaiting a response.

The Board discussed alternative ways in which ADSO and what it offered could be brought to the attention of Members and senior staff other than having a presence at conference venues.

It was suggested that briefing notes on relevant topics and issues of the day could be used to good effect. Diploma Learners have to do a dissertation as part of their course and this may be one of the ways in which to explore topics of interest. Options to be explored further. JA/SK

Award of Main Sponsorship

Modern.Gov had again been awarded the main sponsorship of ADSO for a two year period. The competition this year was very close and the Chairman had given verbal feedback to both sponsors. He was due to meet Nick Crump on 6 October to begin discussions on how the current arrangement could be improved.

The Chairman had also received a further response from Astech who were willing to meet to discuss their future involvement with ADSO.

The Board discussed options for working with software providers to ensure that the needs of the sector are met. It was suggested that a small virtual working group be established who could undertake a survey of members to determine those needs. The Honorary Secretary was asked to include an item on the next agenda of the Board.

TvdH

ADSO Awards

The shortlisting for the ADSO awards took place on 3 September 2014. The panel comprised of the Chairman, John Quinton (Vice Chairman) and Nick Crump from Modern.Gov. Unfortunately Andrew Taylor, Chief Executive of Lincoln City Council had to withdraw due to ill health and was replaced by the Vice Chairman.

The decisions of the Panel were as follows:

Category
Authority/DSO

Unitaries & Districts

Coventry City Council

Norfolk County Council

Boroughs & Districts

Exeter City Council

Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council

Democratic Services Officer

Andrea Thwaite – Cheshire West & Chester Council

Kim Pocock – Nottingham City Council

2 submissions were received for the Learner of the Year Award. After consideration, it was decided to recognise

both learners at the conference in November.

Interviews with the shortlisted parties will take place on 6 October and the winners will be announced at the conference dinner.

It was RESOLVED:

That the Chairman's report be noted.

5.2 Finance Report

The Chairman presented the Finance report in John Lynch's absence.

Since the last Board report in March until end of June there have been a further 19 job adverts bringing in an additional £8,760. Since the beginning of January this gives us a total of 51 job adverts and £23,100 income.

Income from delegates to this year's conference amounts to £32,036.40 including VAT (£26,692 exc VAT). We have also received £4,200 from Modern Mindset for their two year main sponsorship of the Association. £672 has been received from Confabulate for sponsorship, together with £300 for sending round an email alert regarding their company.

Draft expenditure figures so far for the conference amount to £22,538.08. Profit for this year's 1.5 days conference will be quite small compared with previous 1 day events.

Board members were asked to notify John Lynch or Laura Latham if they see job adverts not published on ADSO's website. It would be useful to understand why those authorities decided not to make use of ADSO. All

It was RESOLVED:

That the Finance Report be noted.

5.3 Company Secretary Report

IIMC Bulk Membership Scheme

The Board previously supported the IIMC bulk membership scheme in principle and asked the Company Secretary to produce a marketing plan for consideration. TvDH

In his opinion it was premature to give consideration to this matter at this stage. He will report to a future Board meeting in 2015/16.

Elections

The Board noted the timetable for the 2014 election of Chairman and Vice Chairman. The closing date for nominations will be noon on 26th September 2014. TvDH/LL

Members Benefit Scheme – Wider Wallet.

There was initially good uptake of the scheme but that has decreased. The Company Secretary is due to do a review of the Scheme in January 2015 following the Christmas period. Sustained promotion through the Weekly Bulletin will continue and Wider Wallet will be asked to do a special promotion in the autumn. TvDH

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a marketing plan for IIMC bulk membership be considered at a future Board meeting in 2015/16.
3. That the schedule of dates for the election of Chairman and Vice Chairman be noted.

6 Business Plan update

The Board considered and agreed the updated Business Plan (BP).

The Business Plan will now be published on the website. LL

It is important for the BP to be reviewed and updated regularly. Any updates should be provided to John Quinton, Vice Chairman, who will make the necessary changes. JQ

The Board will review the Business Plan at every other meeting. TvdH

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the Business Plan be approved and published on the public side of the website.. LL/JQ
2. That lead members regularly provide an update on progress and changes on the Forum to enable John Quinton to update the published Business Plan. Any changes to be reported to every other Board meeting. Lead members JQ

7 Training and Qualifications

Mark Towers, Director for Training, provided an update on training courses.

The ADSO Training Programme has continued to pick up as we move into the autumn period. Bookings for the 'Speaking with Confidence' and course have gone well, although the Birmingham and Manchester located courses have had to be rolled into one. The 'Meetings Procedures Plus' course has just started to be promoted and has traditionally been a well-supported course.

A Centre meeting was held in August 2014 in London (a quarterly meeting where the North and South reps from the centre meet). At this meeting a provisional Training Programme for 2015 was put together. The provisional programme is a mix of courses which have been well supported in previous years and are still in demand.

The current payments for delivering a one day course are £125 each for 2 trainers with usually about 20 delegates. On occasion it has felt appropriate for one trainer to run the course when the number of delegates has been 10 or below. To recognise this, it was suggested that instead of paying that trainer £125 it be a fee of £150.

We had a very successful External Quality Assurance Verification Visit in August from our Awarding Body, ProQual. The External Quality Assurance Verifier (Jeff Aston) felt that we were providing a good level of support to learners and Regional Advisers, particularly in relation to guidance materials and learning opportunities. The main action point was related to providing a clearer audit trail of assessment and quality assurance, together with support for the development of the ongoing qualifications portal.

Part of the Centre Business Plan has been to review and produce a development plan for the Qualifications Portal. A survey was circulated to users of the Portal to try and identify areas of development.

The Board was reminded that it had previously sanctioned Barsbank to develop a specific Qualifications Portal back in January 2011 and this has enabled more learners to be engaged in the process and for Advisers and learners to work remotely where appropriate.

However, the results of the survey, ongoing anecdotal feedback, together with feedback from the latest External Quality Assurance Visit, lead to the conclusion that to maintain and develop the roll out of qualifications to learners, then investment is needed in either further upgrades to the current portal or purchasing an 'off the shelf' system.

This is an important action in the Centre's Business Plan and three Board members met with a representative from one of the leading providers of an 'off the shelf' system and prices have also been requested from another recommended company. Barsbank has also been approached for its views on proposed development of the current portal.

The Board discussed the possibility of including a training session on Members' Allowances review and the Vice Chairman undertook to do a draft project plan. JQ

The Board expressed concern over the withdrawal, and in some cases delay in completion, by learners. It was suggested that deadlines be built into the course and that learners be reminded of the benefits to their careers of MT

completion.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the proposed training programme for 2015 be endorsed.
2. That the qualifications update, including the External Quality Assurance Verifier's report, be noted.
3. That on occasion where it is appropriate for one trainer to run a course with less than 10 delegates, the trainer fee be set at £150. MT
4. That an 'off the shelf' development portal be supported and that the Urgency Committee be authorised to award the contract. MT

8 CIPFA Benchmarking Club

The Chairman expressed his concern about the reduction in the number of authorities that participate in the Club. A lot of work had gone into developing the Club and it would be a shame to lose a benchmarking opportunity.

Board members expressed concern that the setup cost and annual subscription remained the same as most of the cost was associated in setting up an authority for the first year. It also didn't seem like best value to benchmark annually as not much seemed to change year on year.

It was RESOLVED:

That the concerns be noted and that the Chairman discuss these with CIPFA to find an acceptable solution. JA

9. Regional Updates

Regional Updates were provided by North East, North West, East Midlands, West Midlands, London, East of England, South West and South East. These can be found

in the regional pages on the website.

10. Working with others

IIMC Region XI Meeting

ADSO will be hosting the next meeting in Bristol on 8th October 2014.

11. Consultations

The Vice Chairman will respond to “the right to challenge parking policies” consultation document.

12. Next meeting and dates for 2015

The next meeting will be held at 11.00 am on 12th December 2014 at Islington Council.

Future dates for 2015 are 20th March, 10th July, 18th September and 11th December 2015.

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm.